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SUBJECT: SECURITY COUNCIL BRIEFING ON UNAMI, MNF-I

**¶1.** (U) SUMMARY: The Security Council held its quarterly meeting January 21 on the situation in Iraq. Special Representative to the Secretary-General (SRSG) Staffan de Mistura briefed for the first time in his new capacity as the head of the United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI), and Ambassador Khalilzad briefed on behalf of the Multinational Force (MNF-I). Both de Mistura and the Ambassador told the Council that significant improvements in the security situation had created an opportunity for durable progress with regard to national reconciliation that must be seized by Iraq. Other members of the Council, as well as Iraqi PermRep Bayati, echoed these statements. Russia, South Africa and Libya were more sparing in their assessments and said they continued to have grave concerns about the security and political situation in Iraq. Russia and Libya were the only delegations to raise the issue of security contractors. Libyan PermRep Ettalhi called on MNF-I to end its "occupation" of Iraq, but Iraqi PermRep Bayati forcefully rejected this statement, stating that MNF-I is a "friendly force." Bayati also restated Iraq's willingness to make a financial contribution to the new UNAMI compound, and asked for the Council to reduce Iraqi oil revenue contributions to the UN Compensation Commission from five to one percent. END SUMMARY.

UNAMI, MNF-I BRIEFINGS

**¶2.** (U) In his first briefing to the Council as Iraq envoy, SRSG de Mistura underscored the importance of Security Council Resolution 1770, which expanded the UN mandate. In dealing with UNAMI's increased responsibilities, de Mistura said the goals are to "monitor emerging trends and propose carefully chosen, and time-sensitive, initiatives - either jumpstarting or galvanizing existing processes." He outlined UNAMI's primary areas of attention: 1) resolving disputed internal boundaries, 2) helping returnees, 3) entering the debate of the timeliness and preconditions for provincial elections, 4) supporting Iraq's international partnership under the Compact, and 5) advancing regional dialogue.

**¶3.** (U) De Mistura said 2008 is "a window of opportunity," given the recent advances in the security situation, and certain preliminary advances in the political and economic situation. Given this situation, UNAMI plans to expand its office in Irbil, and seeks to establish a presence in both Basra International Airport as well as Kirkuk. In short, said de Mistura, UNAMI plans to enhance, both qualitatively and quantitatively, its presence in Iraq.

**¶4.** (U) Drawing on reftel points, Ambassador Khalilzad followed with a briefing on behalf of MNF-I. He underscored the positive effects of the surge - monthly overall attacks have been reduced by 60 percent since June 2007, while hard-hit provinces such as Anbar and the Baghdad area have seen marked increases in stability. The Ambassador noted that Iraqi security forces are "moving forward to take

greater control of their country,s security," and the transition to Provincial Iraqi Control is proceeding as planned. Regional and international engagement continues to improve, and "hope is returning." The Ambassador concluded that Iraqis must take advantage of the momentum created by the improvements in security to pass and implement key legislation, and promote reconciliation.

#### REACTIONS FROM THE SECURITY COUNCIL

**¶5.** (U) Council members uniformly supported the role of UNAMI, and praised the recent downturn in violence. France, the UK and China, among others, expressed their hope that the improvements would prove durable, and to that end emphasized the importance of regional dialogue. Russia also emphasized the importance of regional dialogue, and praised Syria and Iran for the "positive dynamic" of the dialogue. Regarding the security situation, Russian PermRep Churkin said, however, that "declaring victory is premature," and said the security situation will remain unstable for the foreseeable future. He said that UNAMI reporting on the humanitarian and human rights situation was not as fulsome as it had been in past reports, and asked UNAMI to focus on the detention practices of the Iraqi government and MNF-I. Russia and Libya criticized the presence of foreign security contractors in Iraq, with Libya saying their presence should be "criminalized." Russia and Panama also expressed concern about the local citizen watch groups, and said they should be fully integrated under the supervision of Iraqi security forces.

**¶6.** (U) Indonesia said it "draws encouragement from the steady decline in security problems," and looked forward to continuing progress, which "will lead to the withdrawal of MNF-I." Indonesia expressed support for intra-religious

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dialogue within Iraq, and praised recent attempts to bridge Sunni and Shia misunderstandings. South Africa and Libya were more grudging in their acknowledgment of improvements in the security situation. As in previous interventions, South Africa emphasized that the mandate of MNF-I must be closely monitored by the Security Council. SC President and Libyan PermRep Ettalhi, speaking immediately before Iraqi PermRep Bayati, blamed "occupation forces" for all of Iraq,s problems, saying they destroyed Iraq,s political, administrative and cultural institutions. Ettalhi said Iraq is "fully able to shoulder all their responsibilities," and called for a "clear horizon to end the occupation."

#### IRAQ PERMREP BAYATI REACTS

**¶7.** (U) Iraqi PermRep Bayati forcefully rejected Ettalhi,s characterization of MNF-I as an "occupier," stating that MNF-I is a "friendly force." Bayati underscored recent political progress, including the adoption by the Council of Representatives of the Justice and Accountability Law. He said Iraq looks forward to the Security Council addressing Iraq,s challenges outside of the Chapter VII format. Given improvements in the security situation, Bayati said Iraq invites "all brotherly and friendly countries" to re-open their embassies in Iraq. Bayati asked that Iraq,s Paris Club debt be forgiven, and also called for the UN Compensation Committee to reduce payment of compensation from Iraq,s oil revenues from five percent to one percent. Bayati reaffirmed Iraq,s willingness to work with UNAMI, and in this regard, noted that the Ministries of Justice, Defense, Interior and Labor and Social Affairs in Baghdad and Kurdistan have extended an invitation to the UNAMI Human Rights office to visit their respective detention facilities. Bayati closed by noting his government,s willingness "to contribute to building the new headquarters of UNAMI in Iraq to facilitate the fulfillment of its mandate."

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